No. 1

A Dissertation

on

Inflamed and Indolent Ulcers

Experientia justificat remedium
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John Cutler

admitted March 30. 1819

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The principal object to which our exertions should be directed, has been pointed out by the great Lord Verulam, and comprised under the head of usefulness - the correctness of the axiom, has been corroborated, by the collective testimony of wise men at all periods of the world - to advance arguments in support, or to adduce evidence in favor, would be superfluous and unnecessary - if man can fulfill the duties, which he owes to his fellow creatures, or can in any degree approximate to the Deity, it is by devoting his talents, his time, and his industry to the alleviation of the miseries, to which flesh is heir

Unillumed by the benignant rays of paternal love and charity, which the genius of christianity has shed over our souls, the sages of antiquity mourned the fate, and sympathised with the misfortunes, of suffering humanity - instructed by the seldom erring dictates of instinct and intellect, they were conscious that power was given to them, over the various kingdoms of nature, and that a divine providence had not afflicted man, without affording the means of remedying his afflictions - interesting as it would

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he, to revert to the primeval state of our profession, so would it be equally foreign to our present purpose - it is the province of the historian to record the success or the failure of their attempts - to inscribe on the tablet of time the progress of improvement, and likewise to exhibit that most important era of philosophy, when science shook off the shackles which enslaved her, and disenthralled from the trammels of Hypothesis, stood forth in the sacred, and simple majesty of truth.

Since that memorable period, when Lord Bacon, revolutionized the moral world, Medicine and her handmaid Surgery, have mantained a conspicuous ascendancy, and have preserved uninterupted harmony in their connexion with the Sciences - since theory has been deduced from observation and well established facts, how much has been our Science improved, how clearly have the inductive doctrines enabled us to understand the Phenomena of health and disease - to deduce certain and fixed principles, from acknowledged and undeniable data, and in the full tide of successful experiment, to look back with mingled emotions of astonishment and pity, on the fleeting absurdities of unfounded speculation - in fine the pratical nature and utility of

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our profession, alone place us on such high and towering emin-
-ences, and permit us without the imputation of presumption, of
assuming the foremost places in the rank of Philanthropy - these
various considerations, and a well founded conviction, of the impor-
-tance, of our profession to society - of the arduous duties, impera-
-tive, on every member of it to perform, should excite in us, an
ambition to excell, as beneficial in its consequences to man-
-kind in general, as it would be honorable to ourselves in parti-
-cular.

Persuaded that nothing of a very practical
description will be expected, from an inexperienced candidate,
yet sensible of the extreme difficulty, of writing with any regard
to the subject, unless that it be purely practical, and having se-
-lected one, which has been so often, and so ably handled, that
I have good reason to dread, the punishment of my temerity, in
the disapprobation of the attempt - I feel however an higher
degree of confidence, in the pursuit of the present object, than I
could summon, perhaps on any other occasion - the experience
I have had, the observation I have made, and the train of rea-
soning I have been led into, have fully confirmed me in the

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opinion, that induction from sober experiment, is the only road to truth.

In the following pages it will be seen, that I have taken but a cursory view of the subject, confining myself almost exclusively, to the narrow sphere of my own observation, entering on the enquiry, under the strongest conviction, of the lucid, and Philosophical principles of the late Mr John Hunter, I have refrained altogether, from offering any thing, concerning the Pathology of Ulcers - bending all the powers of my will, in submission to this illustrious Physiologist and glowing, with admiration of his talents, I have undeviatingly pursued his precepts, which like the commandments of the Mosaic Law, should be inscribed on tables of Stone - to appreciate the immense value and importance, of this great mans services, we have but to revert to the state of Surgery, and even Medicine, in Great Britain, prior to his time, and contrast its present improved condition, with its former situation - we have but to turn our eyes, to the state of Surgery in France, and over the entire continent of Europe, where we may behold in the unfortunate inmates of their hospitals, numerous examples of the wretched Pathology

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of their Surgeons - the unhappy consequences of prejudice, and irrational Scepticism, but from this disgusting prospect, let us avert and view in this happy country, the glorious triumphs, of sound theory, and correct practice, we have the happiest manifestations, that his spirit, has not been tardy in its influence, or unsuccessful in its example, this digression, if such it can be called, has been intended, as a feeble offering, at the Shrine of him, who preferred the toilsome, drudgery of observation, to the charming amusement of Hypothesis, we may say of him, what Sir Humphry Davy, has said of Cavendish, that his labours will remain unimpaired, amidst the progress of discovery, and be illustrated by discussion, and be exalted by time.

A variety of considerations have induced me, to adopt the treatment, of inflamed and indolent Ulcers, as the subject of a dissertation - during a residence of nearly two years, in the Alms House of this City, in the midst of disease and misery, my attention was particularly excited, by the great predominance of Ulcers, above all other complaints, on prosecuting my enquiries, I discovered, that they constituted, very frequently, the sole complaint of individuals, otherwise in the full enjoyment of perfect health,

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I was very soon impressed with the belief, that some sytematic plan of treatment persevered in, might be attended with beneficial consequences, engrossed with this opinion, I resorted to every expedient, that I conceived would in any degree, contribute to the desired end - to enumerate the very many disappointments, I met with, and the difficulties I encountered, would only tend to swell, this dissertation, without affording, one valuable conclusion, I shall therefore proceed, to detail the plan of treatment, made use of, and confine it, to the cure of the inflamed, and indolent forms of Ulcer.

The Ulcers of the paupers of the Alms House, at their commencement, almost uniformly present, inflamed appearances, and are usually characterized, by all the signs of irritation, after the patient rests for a few days, however these symptoms subside, the Ulcer changes its character altogether, and generally sinks into an atonic condition - this rapid alteration, can easily be accounted for, on considering that exercise, intemperance, and the usual sources of irritation, have been withdrawn.

Observation, and some experience, have satisfied me, of the practical importance, of considering every doubtful

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form of ulcer, as inflamed. when the Ulcer maintains its inflamatory diathesis, the primary object, aught always be to reduce the inflamamation, but in the selection of the means, considerable caution is to be exercised - the constitution of the patient - his habits and idiosyncrasies, are all to be carefully scrutinized - bleeding although the most effectual mode, of allaying inflammation, under ordinary circumstances, will often prove of little avail in this particular form of disease, and will very frequently, produce unpleasant, and even dangerous consequences, - however the inflammatory action, must be overcome, and although the disease is local in its situation, yet as the effects become general, general measures, must be resorted to - at the head of these, we may place, active purging, a strict adherence to low regimen, it may be objected to purging, that the exertion used, counterbalances the good derived, but to this plausible denial of its efficacy, we can answer, that every anticipated bad consequence, may be obviated, by laying the patient, on Sir James Earles bed, simplified and improved, by Doctor Physic - purging at all events must be put in operation, for next to position, which I shall hereafter notice, it constitutes the most successful treatment, it does not appear to me, there is any thing peculiar,

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in one purgative more than another, I have generally preferred the saline cathartics, occasionally combined with some of the Antemonial preparations.

When in Europe I have been much surprised, at the difficulty of overcoming, diseased action in ulcerated extremities, notwithstanding very active measures were put into operation, I have known it a source of astonishment, and considerable vexation, to many eminent Surgeons, to be baffled in their attempts, at curing complaints, comparatively trifling, the cause opposing the cure, was, to me quite inexplicable, but analogous cases, and subsequent experience, have convinced me, that the great, and undiscovered secret, consists in the proper position of the limb, they who have never witnessed, the sudden, extraordinary advantages, derived from, the Elevation of an inflamed limb, will be inclined to impeach my veracity, and question the correctness of my assertions, I consider this last mode of cure, one of the most important improvements, the practice of Surgery has received in modern times, not merely in consideration, of its great importance in the cure of Ulcers, but from its extension to all inflammatory affections of the extremities, I consider it expedient, to emphatically insist

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on the immense, may indispensable, importance of rest and position, I am thus particular, because modern Surgeons, treat very lightly of its efficacy, much as we are indebted to Mr. Baynton, we have nearly as much reason to deplore, the sanction and supp-
-ort, which he has given, to the erroneous and unnatural, doc-
-trine, of motion and exercise, accellerating the cure of Ulcers, a case now lies before me, so much in point, that I shall beg leave to transcribe it.

On the morning of the 3rd. of August 1817, I was requested to visit a man in Shipper St., who had sprained both his Ancles, attempting to run down stairs, on my arrival I found him extended on a bed incapable of standing upright, his feet were very much swollen, with considerable ecchymosis of the Ancles, it occurred to me, that a fair opportunity presented of more fully satisfying myself, with regard to position, and I resolved to institute a comparison, I placed one of his legs in an horizontal posture, and elevated the other by pillows, to about an angle of 35 or 40 degrees, and applied to both ancles, a solution of Muriate of Ammonia and Vinegar in water, on visiting him the next day, and

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examining the state of the parts, I found the echymosis had encreased considerably, and that the pain on the most trifling motion, was represented as excruciating, I ordered him some purgative Medicine, and repeated my visit on the 8th., I was happy to perceive that the swelling had considerably subsided, that the heat and pain, were but little complained of, and that he could move the elevated joint, with more ease, the other ancle, appeared to have continued nearly in Statu-quo, the swelling however had diminished a little, and the pain was not so great as at first, nevertheless its improvement, bore no proportion, to the one which had been elevated, not conceiving it justifiable, to protract the cure for a more perfect illustration of the principle, I had the feet of the bed elevated, and the limbs of the patient placed, parallel to each other, in a few days, the tension, and other symptoms disappeared, and restored the patient, to his usual avocations, I have cited this case, because it afforded, every means of instituting fair comparison, I could however adduce many facts, equally strong in confirmation, of the principle, I am therefore inclined to place more confidence, in position, than in any, or all, the proposed plans of treatment, it will however

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be necessary to preserve the surface of the Ulcer moist, which may be effected, by laying on it, a very light poultice, consisting of any farinaceous substance, when these various remedies fail, I have seen the most happy effect derived, from the application of a blister to the sound skin, three or four inches distant from the Ulcer, I recommend this however, only when inflammation has been coinderably reduced, and when the ordinary remedies fail, but I recommend it in these cases, with the greatest confidence, in its salutary effects, the "Modus Operandi", I think must be ascribed, to the powerful agency of counter irritation, it is however very immaterial, in what manner it operates, it is sufficient to know, that it does good, I shall dismiss this part of my subject, sensible that I have added nothing to the promotion of the art, but satisfied with having borne testimony of the improvements of others.

The next most frequent, and by far the most obstinate form of Ulcer, is that very properly denominated the indolent Ulcer, this species of Ulcer, is directly the inverse of the former, it being necessary in this instance, to excite action, and as Mr Home expresses it, not even simply to effect

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a cure, but to render that cure as permanent as possible, a variety of remedies have been proposed, to effect this object, the greater part of them Empirical in their use, sanctioned by experience, although inexplicable in their operation, we must however except, Doctor Physick's treatment, by removing the callous edges, and the surface of the Ulcer generally, the theory is simple, beautiful, and extensively practical, the Morbid disposition of the part, is destroyed, and a new, and frequently, an healthy action is substituted, in this manner, I have seen Ulcers, which have resisted all other treatment, yield in a very short period, to the action of the caustic, Mr. Baynton's system, whether it acts by keeping the granulations in contact, or by exciting a tonic impression on the part, is a powerful auxiliary in the cure of indolent Ulcers, as I before remarked Mr Baynton, has committed a most egregious error, in permitting his patients to exercise, he in fact counteracts the ostensible object, for which he applies his strips, every motion of the limb, tearing asunder the new formed granulations, and becoming a fresh source of irritation, his untoward zeal, in the recommendation of his practice, appears to have deprived him, of his usual sound judgement.

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I now proceed to speak, of the use of Oximuriate, or Chlorate of Lime, in the true spirit of Empiricism, I resorted to a variety of applications, endeavouring to cure Ulcers, on the legs of old men, in the Surgical wards, of the Alms House, about the middle of the Summer of 1816, I was engaged in trying experiments on Chlorine, as applied to bleaching, and it being then as it remains at present, a subject of warm controversy, in the chemical world, I was desirous of discovering its peculiarities, it occurred to me at the time, that some benefit, might be derived, from its application in the form of solution, to indolent Ulcers, with Doctor Hewson's permission, "he being Surgeon in attendance at the time", I selected four of the most indolent and obstinate cases, and commenced their treatment, by removing the indurated edges by caustic, and by applying the Solution, made into a cold poultice, with Indian meal, as I have by me notes of the cases, I take the liberty of copying two of them.

Nathan Roberts aged 64 years, tall Stature, spare habit, had an Ulcer on his leg of about eight inches circumference, occupying the anterior and

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and lower part of the leg near the ancle joint, it proceeded from an injury he received in the year 1805, from an Hogshead rolling against it, he had been repeatedly in the House, and it was considered, one of the most troublesome cases which had occured, it had no permanently specific character, one time being very indolent, at another, highly irritable, sometimes sloughing, but never healthy, in conjunction with the Oxe Muriate of lime, Bandaging, position, and the usual means were resorted to, I myself paid very particular attention, applied the poultices and bandaged the limb, twice in the twenty four hours, no doubt but these circumstances considerably accellerated the cure, I found it useful occasionally to vary the application, and alternate it, with very dilute nitric acid, solution of Sulphate of Copper, Caustic &c., under this treatment, a generous diet, and a due attention, to the state of the system, the Ulcer healed, and he was discharged as cured, six Weeks from the commencement of the treatment.

Samuel Blane aged fifty six years, full habit, was attacked by the yellow fever, in the year 1803, of which disease he recovered, but it appeached

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that something like, a metastasis of the disorder had taken place, for on the subsidence of the febrile symptoms, his legs were covered with Ulcers, which have never been perfectly healed since, but have presented, a dull, cold indolent, character, occasionally however taking on inflammatory action, this however must be attributed, to the intemperate habits of the patient, on the tenth of August 1816, I undertook the charge of him, and pursued the plan as before detailed, excepting that I conceived it necessary, to make a drain in his system, and for that purpose, two issues were made, in the upper part of the limbs, the progress of the cure was exceedingly rapid, cicatrization was nearly completed, when he was seized with Typus fever, epidemic in the House at the time, which reduced him to his former condition, pleased as I am with this remedy, I consider it but auxiliary, in the cure of Ulcers, I am however fully impressed, with its importance, and the immediate and beneficial change, which attends its use, in all cases it destroys, that very offensive odour, which Ulcers frequently emit.

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of the fluids, Morbidly secreted, would very frequently afford, rational diagnostics in the treatment, I instituted a series of experiments, to ascertain the properties, of the various Morbidly secreted fluids, avocations of an indispensible nature, deprived me of the opportunities, of perfecting their analysis, but as far as I proceeded, I had full reason to be satisfied, with the correctness of the principle I set out with, I am not disposed to attribute the efficacy, or the Modus Operandi, of the Bi-Muriate of Lime, solely to chemical principles, but I have no doubt, that in addition to its being a very peculiar Stimulus, exciting action sui-generis, that it does good, by its chemical action on the secreted fluids, decomposing them, and rendering them innocious I am borne out in these conclusions by the direct experiments of Doctor Bostock.

The Medical World, has been justly disgusted, by the arrogant pretensions, of chemical enthusiasts, who have considered, the animated system, as a mere arrangement of inorganic matter, and as Moliere wittily expresses it, "under this opinion have often converted a living body into a Caput Mortuum" but on the other hand

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it would be equally culpable, to deny the chemical agency of bodies, when out of the Sphere of vital action, this alone I claim for my remedy, and this every candid Pathologist will voluntarily concede.

The most easy method of preparing the Oxe Muriate of Lime, is to take some black oxide of Manganese, pour over it Muriatic acid, and receive the extricated gas in a vessel filled with slack'd Lime, when prepared it should be preserved, in black bottles, or in a dark place, as light decomposes it, it may be dissolved when required, generally in the proportion of an Ounce to the gallon of water, the quantity however is arbitrary, and must be regulated, by circumstances, it may not be irrelevant to remark, that Doctor Hewson, prescribed it, in small doses, in one or two Scrofulous cases, without deriving any advantage whatever, the Medicine exciting distress and Nausea, I have confined myself, to the mere statement of facts, and the inferences legitimately flowing from them.

I might have dilated this Essay into a volume, but it would only acquire that Lapis verbosum,

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which I have fastidiously avoided, in the introduction of this remedy I claim little credit, it was the result of experiment unconnected with any previous theory, but at the moment I forge my claims, I may be permitted to award the meed, of my most elevated admiration, and sincere reverence, of the Talents, and judgement, of that Gentleman, who has brought Surgery to a state of excellence in the United States, not surpassed in the World, I trust that through life, I shall bear grateful testimony, of the many advantages myself, and mankind in general, have derived from the efforts, Example, and instruction, of such distinguished, and modest worth.

Palmam ferat. qui meruit.

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